

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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P 221556Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL HAMILTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2726 PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 HAMILTON 0133

TAGS: PINT, MILI, BD

SUBJECT: MEMCON OF DISCUSSION WITH THE GOVERNOR

1. DURING MARCH 13-15 VISIT OF ERU/NE OFFICE DIRECTOR
FUNSETH, WE CALLED ON THE GOVERNOR AND TOP GOVERNMENT OF
BERMUDA (GOB) OFFICIALS. THE FOLLOWING IS A SYNOPSIS OF
OUR TALK WITH GOVERNOR AND IMPRESSIONS GARNERED
DURING THE DISCUSSION.

2. FUNSETH AND I MET WITH SIR PETER AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE
LATE MORNING OF MARCH 14. THE GOVERNOR SUPPORTED GOB VIEW
THAT, ALTHOUGH THE HANGINGS OF THE TWO BLACK MEN TRIGGERED
THE EVENTS OF EARLY DECEMBER, THE TRUE BASIS WAS A LONG FESTERING
FRUSTRATION AMONG A SMALL NUMBER OF YOUNG BLACKS WHO HAD
NEVER JOINED THE MAINSTREAM OF LIFE EITHER SOCIALLY OR
ECONOMICALLY AND WERE BENT ON DESTRUCTION AS A MEANS OF
DISRUPTING THE LIVES OF THOSE IN MORE COMFORTABLE STRAIGHTS.
IN THIS REGARD, THE GOVERNOR CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT HE REGRETTED
(IN RETROSPECT) THAT HE HAD CALLED IN BRITISH TROOPS TO HELP
QUELL THE DISTURBANCES. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS IT IS GENERALLY
AGREED THAT THE TROOPS WERE NOT NECESSARY AND HIS ACTION IN
CALLING THEM IN HAS BEEN CRITICIZED BOTH LOCALLY AND IN LONDON.

3. ON THE QUESTION OF WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PRECLUDE A
RECURRENCE OF THE DECEMBER DISTURBANCES, THE GOVERNOR

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DISCUSSED THE RECENT APPOINTMENT OF ROYAL COMMISSION TO
INQUIRE INTO THE EVENTS. IT WAS APPARENT THAT HE HAD
SOME RESERVATIONS REGARDING THIS DECISION AND THAT HE FEARED
THAT THE COMMISSION MIGHT OPERATE UNDER A BROADER MANDATE
THAN HE HAD ENVISIONED AND THAT ITS CHAIRMAN, LORD PITT, HAD
CLOSER TIES TO THE LABOR PARTY THAN HE HAD BEEN LED TO
BELIEVE. (SEE HAMILTON 73). THE COMMISSION IS SCHEDULED TO

CONVENE HERE FIRST WEEK OF APRIL.

4. INDEPENDENCE. THE GOVERNOR REAFFIRMED THAT HIS ENVISIONED TIME-TABLE FOR INDEPENDENCE, I.E., SIX TO EIGHT YEARS, REMAINS REALISTIC. HE TOLD US THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THE ENTIRE SUBJECT WITH DAVID OWEN DURING HIS FEBRUARY TRIP TO LONDON AND AGAIN HAD RECEIVED ASSURANCES THAT, BARRING ANY UNFORESEEN SHIFTS IN LOCAL PUBLIC OPINION, THE UK WOULD NOT PRESSURE ITS COLONY TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE DID EMPHASIZE HOWEVER, THAT IF HE WERE EVER FORCED TO AGAIN CALL IN BRITISH TROOPS TO BOLSTER LOCAL SECURITY FORCES, THEN LONDON WOULD LIKELY HAVE TO REVERSE ITS CURRENT POSITION AND REQUIRE GOB TO MOVE FORWARD QUICKLY TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE. IN THIS REGARD, HE DISCUSSED SOME INITIATIVES HE HAD TAKEN TOWARDS BOLSTERING THE LOCAL SECURITY FORCE.

5. LOCAL SECURITY FORCES - U.S. TRAINING. WITH HIS ADMONITION FROM DAVID OWEN THAT ANY FUTURE NECESSITY TO CALL IN BRITISH TROOPS WOULD CAUSE THE FOREIGN OFFICE GRAVE PROBLEMS, SIR PETER AND THE GOB HAD TAKEN STEPS TO DEVELOP A MORE EFFECTIVE LOCAL SECURITY FORCE. IN LATE DECEMBER A NEW CABINET PORTFOLIO WAS CREATED ATTACHING SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BERMUDA REGIMENT. ACTION HAS ALREADY BEEN TAKEN TO CREATE A SPECIAL RESERVE CONSTABULARY FORCE WHICH CAN HANDLE ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS DURING AN EMERGENCY, FREEING UP THE REGULAR POLICE CONTINGENT FOR OTHER DUTIES.

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THE BERMUDA REGIMENT/COMPRISES APPROXIMATELY 300 BERMUDIANS WHO RECEIVE BIWEEKLY YEAR-ROUND TRAINING LOCALLY. TRADITIONALLY THE REGIMENT HAS TWO WEEKS BIVOUAC TRAINING IN JAMAICA. THEY ARE PROVIDED FACILITIES AND JAMAICAN MILITARY EXPERTIZE IN CARRYING OUT THEIR PROGRAM. THE

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2727
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 HAMILTON 0133

GOVERNOR AND GOB, FOR SEVERAL REASONS, WOULD PREFER THAT THE TRAINING TAKE PLACE IN ONE OF THE SOUTHERN STATES IN THE US. IN THIS REGARD, DURING A VISIT HERE ON MARCH 9 OF GENERAL SIR ROLLO PAIN (DEFENSE ATTACHE AT BRITISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON), THE GOVERNOR ASKED SIR ROLLO TO INQUIRE INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF THE US PROVIDING TRAINING SITES AND OTHER SUPPORT IN ORDER THAT THE ANNUAL BIVOUACS CAN BE MOVED OUT OF THE CARIBBEAN AREA. SIR ROLLO IS EXPECTED TO REPORT BACK THE RESULT OF HIS PRELIMINARY INQUIRIES DURING A RETURN VISIT HERE IN EARLY MAY. (MORE DETAILS IN MEMCON WITH PREMIER TRANSMITTED SEPARATELY.)

6. THE OPPOSITION PARTY. SIR PETER HAS SERIOUS RESERVATIONS THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTY, AS PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED, COULD PROVIDE A VIABLE AND EFFECTIVE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. HE IS INTIMIDATED BY ITS PRESENT LEADER AND SUSPICIOUS OF THE TRUE POLITICAL BENTS OF MANY OF THE PARTY RANK AND FILE. HOWEVER, REALIZING THAT THE EMERGENCE OF THE PLP AS THE RULING PARTY AT SOME FUTURE DATE IS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY, HE HAS EMBARKED ON A CAMPAIGN OF MAKING THE OPPOSITION MORE RESPONSIBLE. HE HAS MUCH MORE FREQUENT CONTACT WITH THE PARTY MEMBERS THAN DID HIS PREDECESSOR. HE HAS TRIED TO DEVELOP CLOSER TIES BETWEEN MEMBERS OF BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES, I.E., BI-WEEKLY MEETINGS WITH KEY MEMBERS OF BOTH GROUPS LONDON TRIP HE TOLD US THAT HE ARRANGED FOR THE LABOR PARTY

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TO SEND RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE TO BERMUDA TO PROVIDE EXPERTISE TO THE PLP.
COMMENT: DURING THE SHORT PERIOD THEY HAVE BEEN IN BERMUDA, THE GOVERNOR AND HIS WIFE HAVE HAD AN EXCELLENT PRESS AND ARE MUCH MORE RESPECTED BY MOST BERMUDIANS THAT WERE HIS PREDECESSORS. HE HAS MAINTAINED A LOWER "COLONIAL" PROFILE AND HAS TURNED OVER SOME OF HIS INHERENT POWERS TO THE GOB. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS MY OPINION THAT HE IS FEELING SOMEWHAT OUT OF HIS ELEMENT IN HIS FUNCTION AS A COLONIAL GOVERNOR. IT IS CLEAR THAT HE IS NOT AS COMFORTABLE OR CONFIDENT AS HE MUST HAVE BEEN IN HIS TRUE DIPLOMATIC ASSIGNMENTS, AND HE HAS RESERVATIONS ABOUT DECISIONS HE HAS MADE IN THE PAST AND IS APPREHENSIVE ABOUT PENDING DECISIONS. HE HAS A MUCH CLOSER WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PREMIER THAN PRECEDENT RECORDS AND MIGHT BE MUCH MORE VULNERABLE TO PRESSURES THAT ARE AS MUCH PARTY MOTIVATED AS THEY ARE

GOVERNING IN GENERAL. AS FAR AS US INTERESTS HERE ARE CONCERNED, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT HE IS ENTIRELY SENSITIVE TO OUR POLITICAL AND DEFENSE INTERESTS BOTH WITHIN THE BILATERAL AND NATO FRAMEWORK AND THAT THE USG WILL BE KEPT INFORMED IN DETAIL OF POLICIES AND ACTIONS THAT AFFECT THOSE INTERESTS.

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